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OXCART

2500 m. range

BYE # 44009-66-b

3 October 1966

DRAFT FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

SUBJECT: Certain Political Aspects of OXCART Project

I. General

1. In general, we believe that most governments would not prove receptive to US proposals that they cooperate in a program of Oxcart flights -- particularly since we assume that they would be told, or in any case suspect, that such flights would be targetted against the USSR. In the case of certain close US allies, those in the governments who are most concerned with intelligence and military strategy would no doubt press their political superiors to cooperate; and some of the latter might sympathize with the objectives of the effort. However, except as noted below, we believe that the political chiefs would prefer that their countries not be involved and, in effect, would hope that the US would either decide not to conduct the program, or would make arrangements for carrying it out which did not include them. Certain governments might be somewhat more receptive to proposals ~~for~~ granting ~~the US~~ overflight rights, or cooperating in refueling arrangements, but almost none would be enthusiastic, and actual agreement would depend on cases, as discussed below.

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2. Some friendly governments would strongly question the need or desirability of these flights in principle -- having in mind the heightened East-West tensions resulting from the U-2 crisis of 1960, the subsequent public undertakings by President Eisenhower and President Kennedy that overflights of the USSR would not be ~~undertaken~~, *resumed* *and the would be taken account of* and the commonly known fact that the US is using satellite reconnaissance -- which would seem to them to do the job with few of the risks. *9* ~~In addition~~, there is a widespread belief -- much more evident and pervasive than in the '50s or early '60s -- that the danger of the Soviets initiating war is small; in the minds of many governments, including those in NATO, this belief not only argues against the urgency of increasing intelligence coverage on the USSR, but also fortifies their inclination not to risk reviving even greater East-West tensions -- especially since they are already worried over the effects of Vietnam on US-Soviet relations. Some friendly governments would feel more strongly on these matters than would others, and there are of course important differences between them in terms of their own freedom of action (e.g., with respect to constitutional requirements, the importance and orientation of public opinion, numbers of people to be consulted, and the like).

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